



Belfast – healthy city
Challenges and priorities

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One of the conclusions we came to quite early on in the Health Action Zone's life was that it wasn't really good enough to develop good projects, good as they are in themselves. What we actually needed was to make a bit of a leap and work toward bringing together those partners that can influence on health in a systematic and integrated way. So we designed a way of working which is focused on either an area community, a community of interest or an issue that's a particular problem. So for example on the issue of suicide and self-harm we've brought together all of the community and indeed those most directly affected by suicide, together with those working in Health and Social Services, together with Education, with the Departments for Social and Economic Regeneration and together we've built a new kind of response to what is a particularly disturbing issue.

So that's an issue based work. We've also worked in settings such as schools where we have begun to see the integration of those working in school as teachers, with parents, with young people and other services that are based around a school and now we talk about a fully serviced school or an extended school. For six years we've been working in a programme called Communities in Schools and again, the philosophy there is if you can bring together those agencies and organizations and people, you will actually address some of these core complex um issues.

We're very fortunate in this part of Belfast in that we have nine Healthy Living Centres working in an integrated way. Now the role that we played with the Healthy Living Centres is actually to say – well how could we support the learning between and across the different Healthy Living Centres? How could we support their learning in terms of evaluation and how could we help network some of the resources that we might need to use? So we did form a Healthy Living Centre network and that's proved to have been very effective in terms of supporting their overall development.

But we've been working in a number of other areas and in communities of particular disadvantage such as travellers, and so on, so you know it's area based, it's community of interest based and it's issue based.